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THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT: GOFF, HAYDEN AND AN ADMONITION FROM FRANK BARDACKE

BY ALEXANDER COCKBURN

I hope we are witnessing the omens of larger and enduring resistance in the antiwar movement. No doubt about it, the people are turning against the war. The Bush crowd are truly on low ground, and the political levees are starting to crumble. They feel it in Congress.

Already there are private meetings, both sides of the aisle, evolving new positions on the war, exit strategies and so forth. Waiting in the wings are impeachment inquiries, hearings on Bush's low balling of the casualties, the lack of body armor. Once Bush's base starts to crumble these matters will move center stage.

Right now there's a big argument going on about exit strategies and schedules from Iraq. Cindy Sheehan and many say Out now. Then the responsible politicos say, Be realistic. Start to leave at the end of 06. Stan Goff took a few lusty swings at Tom Hayden on our CounterPunch website, on this very matter of scheduling. Goff duly got attacked as being (a) nasty and abusive, and (b) being divisive and unrealistic.

I wrote Stan a note, as follows:

"There's nothing wrong with vigorous invective. The left doesn't get places often because it's way TOO polite, too reluctant to air differences... I looked at the Progressive Democrats of America site last week and saw a parcel of shredded platitudes about internationalizing the occupying force. You were quite right to make fun of that kind of blather. This "internationalization" line reminds me of the prudent line back in 2002 and 2003, before invasion, when a lot of peo-

(**Antiwar** *continued on page 2)*

Return to Flint

A Workers' Dystopia

BY MICHAEL DONNELLY

I was visiting in Michigan this July. Along with the usual outdoor activities and the family reunion, I took the opportunity to take my Salem, Oregon-raised son on a trip to the old neighborhood in my hometown of Flint. As fate would have it, the day the soon-to-be-college kid and I arrived for our Springsteen moment in the sweltering birthplace of modern Trade Unionism was also the day the AFL-CIO started its annual convention in Chicago.

So the news reports were dominated by stories of how the Service Employees International Union and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters were officially defecting from the AFL-CIO, citing the misleadership of John Sweeney and the unending hemorrhaging of union numbers over the past two decades.

In a country where one out of every three private sector jobs was once held by a union member and now but 8 per cent of those jobs are union, I couldn't help thinking that all Sweeney and his colleagues needed to do was to visit Flint where they could see why others have lost faith in them.

Flint was and is the quintessential company town. Chrysler, Chevrolet, Nash, Champion and Buick all started in Flint. General Motors, the world's largest corporation when I was growing up there, was the main employer and had a hand in every aspect of public life in Flint for decades. The corporation built entire neighborhoods and health clinics for its workers. Community schools started in Flint. For the first time, schools were open for community activities on nights and weekends. One of the first Junior College to Community Collage transitions also took place there. Once upon a time GM felt that educating its workers and their children was good business. At one time aspiring education administrators all wanted a stint in Flint on their resumes. GM also thought it a good idea to require its executives to live within the city limits.

Of course, all this came about after the key event in American labor history – the 44-day sit-down strike of the nascent UAW.

Before the Depression there were 470,000 auto workers. By 1936, that number had shrunk to less than 230,000. Wages also dropped off – from \$40 a week to \$20. The average annual take-home pay for an autoworker was around \$900 at a time the government determined that \$1,600 was the minimum amount a family of four could live decently on. Working conditions were quite dangerous. Safety gear nonexistent. Serious injury was common. Workers weren't even allowed to speak in the lunchroom. Average executive GM pay was \$200,000 per year; equivalent to \$5 million today.

On August 26, 1935, auto workers organized the United Auto Workers (UAW). GM refused to recognize the new union. Taking a cue from successful European strikers, the UAW launched the Kelsey-Hayes sit-down strike in Detroit. After success there, union leaders Walter and Victor Reuther and United Mine Workers president John L. Lewis of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) headed to Flint for the main event. In quick order, a number of strikes were carried out. On November 18, the UAW struck a Fisher Body plant in Atlanta. On December 16, two GM plants in Kansas City were shut down, and on December 28, a Fisher

(**Flint** *continued on page 4)*

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ple wrapped up the antiwar message in talk about a UN force. Very polite, and totally unrealistic, since the UN is a wholly owned subsidiary of the US.

"We aren't, thank God, a fascist country here, like Germany was in WW2, but suppose the Germans had been able to speak freely, would they have been talking in 1942 about a withdrawal of German forces from the Soviet Union beginning at the end of 1943? No, by mid-'42 any sane German would have been saying AUS NOW. And they would have been realistic, because by the end of '43 most of the German soldiers were dead or captives. Do you want to tell all those US soldiers sent to Iraq that they should ride around in their Humvees waiting to get blown up till the end of 2006 when withdrawal can commence on a schedule that preserves PDA credibility. If so, they'll have a lot of explaining to do, to mothers like Cindy Sheehan."

Hardly had I fired this off to Stan, before I got a remonstrative note from Frank Bardacke in Watsonville, my political consigliere on many issues. Frank has plenty of credibility, not least in the area of antiwar organizing. He was one of the Oakland 7, arrested and tried after the attacks on the Oakland induction center in the late 60s. He's a very radical guy.

Bardacke said…well, hell, I'll give him the stage.

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"Alex: Goff is very clever and much of what he says is absolutely true but I don't think he shows much sense about what an anti-war movement is like or how we could create a situtation where in Goff's words 'We make the political cost so high in the US for continuing the war that it threatens the entire US state with destablization.'

"In a mass movement against the war a lot of people are going to do a lot of different things. That's what a mass movement is. Some people are going to pass out mealy mouthed petitions; some people are going to go to weekly vigils; some people are going to go to big marches; some people are going to think about supporting anti-war candidates; some people are going to try to counter military recruiters at high schools;some people are going to try to stop military supplies from leaving the US for Iraq. All of it together is what makes "the political cost so high..." not just the radical action in the streets and schools. And it is the overall shift in opinion against the war which makes the more militant action powerful; otherwise the radicals are easily isolated and ignored.

"Things are beginning to change and Cindy had a lot to do with it. But one of the reasons that her action has been so effective is because the American people are turning against the war, as are even some sections of the media. Hayden's petition itself is an indication that more and more folks are looking for ways to end the war. In that respect it is a good sign. It doesn't prevent more radical deeds; and despite its proper sounding nonsense it may even help create an atmosphere in which more radical action is welcomed.

"That's the way it happened in the movement against the war in Vietnam. There were years of big moderate marches and liberal petitions before shutting down induction centers and military mutinies became a popular alternative among large numbers of people.And it was the whole thing together which put limits on the US ability to wage the war in Vietnam.

"Look. We have a tough task. It is much harder to build an anti-war movement when there is no draft. Not entirely, but to a large extent the anti-war movement was not an act of solidarity with the Vietnamese, but an act of self-interest by hundreds of thousands of young men who did not want to fight, kill, and die.

"It is going to be very hard to get the US out of Iraq — even harder, I believe than it was to get the US out of Vietnam. Vietnam was geographically on the periphery, and had no important natural resource. Iraq is at the center of the political world, and, of course, there is oil. Furthermore, as your brother pointed out, great powers can not suffer small losses.

"Any loss becomes a big loss. The folks who call the shots in the US (Democratic and Republican politicians and the people above them) are not going to leave Iraq until they are forced to. I think it is going to take a long time. We can't force them out; only the Iraqis can. But we can put limits on their ability to wage the war.

"Actually I think we are doing well. Our vigil in Watsonville is lively and growing. We hear that the vigils elsewhere are too. During the vigil people planned a successful effort to get the school district to make it easier for parents to block the military recruiters from talking to their children. People also go into the local high school and speak against the war. Folks sign petitions, write post cards, argue politics, make sure that everyone knows about the next big demonstration. Sure, we aren't blocking the street yet. But you don't start out blocking the street. You block it when there a good number of people who support you. And building that support takes all kinds of work.

Goff is right. We are for immediate withdrawal. We are for immediate withdrawal because it is US troops who are provoking a civil war; it is not the presence of US troops that prevents one. And all the calls for something less than immediate withdrawal—including Hayden's—confuses that question. And so it is right not only to support immediate withdrawal but to argue against some kind of staged, limited withdrawal, like the one proposed by Hayden. But at the same time we welcome everyone who is now moving against the war, and we encourage them to do everything they can to stop it, even if it is not exactly what we think is the best thing to do.

Well, that is a lot of words Alex. Maybe I could have just said this to Goff about Hayden: Back in the day we always welcomed the presence of opportunists. It meant that they sensed that within our movement there were opportunities.

Frank

Footnote: these reflections ran in my CounterPunch website diary, but I'd like our newsletter subscribers to have them in hand. AC. CP

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The Poor, the Kleptocrats and Disasters

Mexico 1985 - New Orleans 2005

By Heather Williams and Miguel Tinker Salas

If there yet existed doubts that that the American political system fell far on the other side of the line dividing democracy from kleptocracy, the televised specter of tens of thousands of people waiting for water, food, and evacuation from New Orleans in the wake of Katrina surely sunk those beneath black water. Today citizens interested in reestablishing a system with civil liberties, reasonable oversight of public finances and verifiable elections would do well to remember a disaster in Mexico which eerily parallels the tragedy in New Orleans, and in which impromptu rescue brigades became a powerful civic movement for democratic change.

Twenty years ago , on September 19 and 20, 1985, a series of earthquakes, including one measuring 8.1 on the Richter scale, leveled much of the center of Mexico City leaving upwards of 5,000 people dead and over 40,000 injured. Thousands of buildings were destroyed instantly, and tens of thousands sustained serious damage. In the immediate aftermath of the quake, an estimated 800,000 people were left homeless as water mains failed, gas lines ruptured and buildings caught fire. Even communication with the outside world was cut off, as the city's central switchboard was crushed in a dilapidated building.

Like Katrina, this was the disaster that scientists and engineers had predicted. Both New Orleans and Mexico City are audacious bets with nature: New Orleans grew great and beautiful behind levees, sinking lower each year, unreplenished by sediment from the Mississippi; Mexico City had been built in a drained lakebed with unstable mud and clay foundations crisscrossed by faults.

The more ironic parallel, given Americans' greater stated confidence in their government than Mexicans', is the official response to these disasters. In the aftermath of the earthquake, desperate citizens needing medical care, housing, and rescue services waited frantically and found to their horror that help from the government never arrived. The help that did materialize in the immediate aftermath of the disasters came from heroes whose names we will never know: volunteers and reporters in small boats going house to house in New Orleans; neighborhood brigades digging through wreckage with their bare hands, or the so-called "moles" who crawled into eddies and cracks looking for survivors in Mexico City.

In both cases, governments failed to evacuate danger zones, to assess immediate possibilities for rescue of buried or injured people, to locate the displaced, to unite families separated in the chaos, and to set up clearinghouse services for people who would need long-term assistance finding housing and rebuilding their lives. What is more, disasters revealed taxpayer-built institutions hamstrung by cronyism and politics. Finally, the public face of both disasters featured out-of-touch officials declaring that they and they alone would take control of the situation, going so far as to block aid from non-federal entities where it was offered.

In Mexico's case, vital emergency aid from abroad was rejected; in New Orleans, vital shipments were turned away by Federal Emergency Management Agency officials and soldiers who finally arrived on the scene spent more energy pointing guns at reporters than delivering help to the survivors.

Perhaps the most sobering commonality in both disasters is what they revealed about poverty, geography, and official priorities. In both cities, the poor suffered the greatest number of casualties and faced the greatest losses to their homes and neighborhoods. New Orleans' working poor lived in ramshackle wood houses in low-lying areas; Mexico City's quake victims tended to live in dilapidated high rises made of substandard materials. Now, flood victims would do well to ask themselves precisely what Mexico City's victims did two decades ago: with a federal administration keen on cutting back social services, health care, and housing for low-income families, what in fact will be rebuilt? Will it be casinos and restaurants or homes and hospitals?

Indeed, in Mexico City, amid economic crisis and government budget austerity, it was unprecedented civic mobilization that drove reconstruction of destroyed health care facilities, schools, and apartment buildings

What the voices of the delta revealed last month, however, is that there is not quite as much distance as one might imagine between Mexico then and the United States today.

The parallels between Mexico City in 1985 and New Orleans in 2005 are ones that most Americans don't want to draw. After all, the Mexican government was at the time an authoritarian state riddled with corruption and dominated by a single party, whereas the American system is presumed by many to be an inclusive democracy and a model for other countries.

What the voices of the delta revealed last month, however, is that there is not quite as much distance as one might imagine between Mexico then and the United States today. CP

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Body plant in Cleveland. On December 30, the UAW called for a major strike against GM with but one goal – that of forcing GM to recognize the UAW as the legitimate representative of the auto workers. Workers in Flint struck the Fisher Body #1 plant. Within two weeks, 135,000 workers from factories in 35 cities in 14 states joined the strike. Over 150,000 supporters rallied in Detroit's Cadillac Square. By January 1, employees at 17 Flint plants joined the sit-down.

The strike went on for six weeks. Before it was over and the goal achieved, the workers refused to leave their plants, slept on car seats, welded factory doors and windows shut and ate food smuggled in by friends and families. Michigan Governor Frank Murphy, son of Irish revolutionaries, whose grandfather was hanged by the British, sent in 4000 members of the National Guard who set up machine guns around the plants and with fixed bayonets cut off food deliveries.

Governor Murphy met with John L. Lewis on February 10 and informed the famed unionist that "The law must be supported." Therefore, he planned to order the guard to attack and clear the plants the next day.

As Saul Alinsky wrote, Lewis responded:

"Tomorrow morning I shall personally enter General Motors Plant Chevrolet Number Four. I shall then walk to the largest window in the plant, open it, divest myself of my outer raiment, remove my shirt and bare my bosom. Then when you order your troops to fire, mine will be the first breast those bullets will strike!

"And as my body falls from the window to the ground, you listen to the voice of your grandfather as he whispers in your ear, 'Frank, are you sure you are doing the right thing?'"

Murphy did not press the attack.

Instead, the strike was settled in the UAW's favor on the next day, February 11, 1937, only after the wives of the workers formed the Emergency Women's Brigade. Hundreds of women donned red berets, lined up and stood face-to-face with the armed Guardsmen outside the plants. A week before the settlement, the children of the workers staged a parade in the snow through downtown Flint. President Roosevelt leaned on GM to meet with the UAW. Major GM stockholder Charles Stewart Mott saw the light and along with GM vice-president William S. Knudsen convinced GM president Alfred Sloan to settle. They were well aware that skilled workers who knew how to run the expensive equipment were vital to the corporation.

The days of collective bargaining arrived. The UAW was recognized as the sole bargaining agent for the auto workers. Workers at the 17 plants got an immediate 5 per cent raise and piece work was abandoned in favor of a straight hourly wage. The UAW even won a 30-hour work week with six hour days! Those who made the cars could finally afford to buy one. It raised the standard of living across the country.

In the 1950s, Flint was as close to a workers' utopia as we've yet seen in the USA. In addition to the good schools, we had recreation leagues, picnics, outings, educational seminars…all provided free by GM, the UAW or the General Motors Institute, the technical school for future GM administrators and engineers, now called Kettering University and one of the few remnants of GM's presence in its hometown. A performing arts auditorium was built along with a planetarium. GM workers were paid well enough that many also had "cottages" – second homes on Michigan's many "Up North" lakes. The "Thirty and Out" policy won by the UAW meant that one could begin work in the shop after High School and retire with benefits at age 48, as many of my former classmates have done.

In 1950, GM president Charles E. Wilson made $652,000, equivalent to $4.4 million today – obscene, but less than his predecessors and nowhere near the ludicrous $706 million Oracle CEO Larry Ellison pocketed in 1999 when average CEO pay topped out at $12.5 million. In 2003, GM's top five executives averaged $7 million in compensation.

GM lifted the requirement that its execs live in Flint. Soon they quickly took their big salaries and fled to posh suburbs, leaving behind a crumbling city with serious racial tensions between the African-Americans and working-class whites who flocked to the plants in droves during the Second world War and thereafter. Flint factories built much of the US WWII tanks and other heavy materiel.

The old-school philanthropist and Utica-native C. S. Mott never left once he arrived in 1906. He died in Flint in 1973 at age 97. He served three different times as Flint Mayor. He owned over 2 million shares of GM stock. For many years that brought him a $6 dollar a share dividend. Mott was also the money force behind the community schools. The Community College that Mott donated the major part of his farm to and many millions to now bears his name. The C. S Mott and the Ruth Mott Foundations to this day make grants for public services in his adopted hometown.

Would the last one left please tear down the plant?

"I shall...divest myself of my outer raiment, remove my shirt, and bare my bosom. Then when you order your troops to fire, mine will be the first breast those bullets will strike!"

By the mid-70s, Mott was gone and the downturn was full on. The decline was and is palpable. GM once employed over 77,000 in Flint. Now it's down to less than 17,000. The city population peaked at 207,000 in the mid-1960s and is now down to 124,000. Official Flint unemployment hovers around 14 per cent – it was at 13.9 per cent in June. Buick City's huge Dickensian 235-acre, six-factory complex employed over 28,000 union workers as recently as the mid-80s.

Then came the final blow. The UAW even assisted the downsizing, echoing GM's lies about "competitiveness and profitability". At the time, GM's own internal quality report listed Buick City as its second most productive of 19 major facilities. When hundreds of thousands of union workers went on strike nationwide in 1998 to protest further job losses at GM's Flint parts plants, the UAW negotiated a settlement that cost 1,300 of the 9,200 striking parts plants workers their jobs. GM posted a $2 billion dollar profit that year.

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At the same time, GM shipped 190 salaried workers at Buick from Flint to Detroit's Renaissance Center. Another 2,050 engineering and tech support workers were sent from Flint to Warren, MI.

I couldn't take my son to the origin site of the Sit-Down, a group of plants that came to be known as "Chevy-in-the Hole", as it was located in a hollow along the Flint River. This facility, where I once worked while attending community college, is long gone; with just the remains of a stolen and never replaced small plaque that noted the historic events that took place there. So we took a trip to the Buick City factory complex instead.

All that's left of this major facility is a 235-acre toxic site, smothered in the rubble of the demolished plants. The main entrance to the workers' parking lot, all five lanes of it, end at a fallen down security fence. Little traffic moves on the street that borders the site; James P. Cole Boulevard, named after an early Flint police chief famous for doing GM's bidding and suppressing workers. A new brick sign ludicrously states "Riverview Industrial Park", yet nothing exists behind it but a few weeds and sickly trees sprouting amongst the abandoned tires and assorted debris.

Similarly, my old neighborhood is fast disappearing. Houses are gone, replaced by vacant weedy lots. Others stand empty, with burn scars and broken windows. Many have fallen roofs. Friends of mine grew up in these houses, now vacant lots. A number of those fine community schools now stand abandoned – like Cook Elementary across the street from my childhood home where I spent countless hours playing sports. Not a child is around this summer day. Trees grow through the walls of buildings near my old high school.

Recently the county has set up a "land bank" which forecloses on dilapidated homes – usually after slumlords have let the taxes go unpaid for years. Already the land bank has over 5000 properties and has demolished over 500 of them and boarded-up most of the rest. The Land Bank also mows over 4000 empty lots per year and removes hundreds of tons of debris annually.

As Michael Moore showed in *Roger & Me's* scene of that depressing "Flint Pride" march, the downtown is a disaster, even with the University of Michigan pumping money into its campus there. New retro steel arches soar over downtown's empty brick streets. On the sunny weekday afternoon we visit, there is nary a pedestrian in sight. UM even took over the site of the ill-fated 1984 (the year) monstrosity called AutoWorld, a half-baked Six Flags indoor amusement park scheme that siphoned off some $80 million in redevelopment funds, including its own freeway off-ramp, before going bankrupt its first year. (Who can forget Moore's scene of that peppy Chamber of Commerce civic booster blathering on and on about the wide-ranging benefits of AutoWorld?) The huge Hotel Durant, named for GM co-founder Billy Durant – the guy who recruited Mott to move his wagon works to Flint – once the posh landmark for visiting executives, is now an eight-story empty skeleton awaiting the wrecker's ball or possible renovation by the Land Bank.

I know my environmentalist friends would look at all this and crow, "See. Mother Nature will take it back". They only know sprawl as an issue. Sure, the air and the river are cleaner. But, on this day, my roots take over and I find no solace in this, just very reflective sadness.

Today, Flint is a minority majority city with 53 per cent of its population African-American. Yet, in 2002 the city's black mayor (a former classmate) Woodrow Stanley was Recalled as folks lurched around for someone to blame; other than the obvious suspect. Even a smart, caring and competent mayor like Stanley couldn't stem the tide caused when a major corporation abandons its hometown. Even that famed native of nearby all-white Davison, Michael Moore, joined the business interests and called for Woody's head. Well, they got it and now Flint has one of the most dysfunctional city governments imaginable.

The crackpot new mayor Don "The Don" Williamson (a white millionaire entrepreneur with a colorful past) has called for police surveillance of city council members, calling the councilors "idiots", "three sets of Three Stooges" and "a cancer on society." The mayor has taken to calling "emergency" meetings and when councilors can't attend has threatened to have them arrested. Thankfully, they don't have the "Strong Mayor" system At least the city has a quasi-functioning city government again. In 2002, the state had to take over the city for a year as financial problems metastasized to over $40 million in debt. The school district faces similar measures as it is now some $20 million in debt and closing many schools and increasing class sizes.

Williamson ("I retired from the 10th grade to go to work") was convicted by a federal jury in 1962 of conspiring to steal autos and sell them in other states. In 1963 he pleaded guilty to violating the National Bankruptcy Act and served three years and four months in prison. He and his wife, Patsy Lou, own the country's largest Buick dealership. But recently the manager that brought the dealership from near-bankruptcy to success has sued the couple after they unceremoniously dumped him once the dealership became the high producer he made it.

Still Williamson has his eyes squarely on the ball. He recently was sued by the ACLU for banning the local *Flint Journal* from the premises of City Hall. Seems the paper did its job and reported his checkered past and continues to report on his bizarre antics as mayor. On August 12, the conscientious County Prosecutor Arthur Busch of Moore's *Columbine*, began an investigation into allegations that Williamson's City Administrator and former campaign manager, Peggy R. Cook, tried to shake down a lawn-mowing contractor. The city owes the contractor $150,000 for past work and the allegation is that he has to pay a $5000 bribe to get his contract renewed. (Dis-

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closure: my brother-in-law was City Administrator under Mayor Stanley.)

A whole pack of folks have a stake in keeping the awful status quo going. From black pastors who wield far more power than sense; to the business owners who drove out Stanley and enshrined Williamson; to the usual Democrat hacks who poverty pimp their way to reelection in such depressed areas across the nation.

But relief is on the way. Mayor Williamson calls for a new housing development, a casino and a race track on the abandoned GM properties. "I think a Flint casino would be the most profitable casino in the world, or anyplace else for that matter", Williamson proclaims, apparently forgetting the huge profits Quark is ringing up on Deep Space Nine. Another scheme is for Kettering to use tax moneys to set up what The Don touts as "The Silicon Valley of Fuel Cells" research facility at the former Sit-Down site. AutoWorld Syndrome, anyone?

Laughable? Yes, in the same sorry way as Moore's movies. Thirty years into the downsizing, Flint still cannot get it right. Neither can the AFL-CIO. The lack of vision in Big Labor mirrors that in Flint government. How might things have turned out had labor staged a general strike to protect those Flint workers' jobs? An industry-wide one, or even a national strike protesting the loss of jobs in industries across the board was certainly in order and certainly the UAW must have discussed it.

A shut-down only demanding universal health care might well have done the trick. Toyota recently decided to site a new $800 million plant in Ontario, despite subsidy offers of over $125 million from various US locales. The reasons Toyota gave are: 1) US workers are undereducated and 2) Canadian workers cost $5 less per hour due to government guaranteed healthcare. GM, with retirees and union workers (a 2-1 ratio of retirees to workers) with full GM-paid health care coverage might well have joined its union in supporting a plan that would level the healthcare playing field. Why not spend those proffered subsidies on better schools and healthcare and take away two reasons for job flight? Why not demand it?

While still hanging on as the Number 1 carmaker, how did abandoning its hometown turn out for GM? By 1992, the company, like its hometown, was on the brink of bankruptcy. Unlike Flint, it recovered then, but earlier this year GM announced a $839 million loss for the first quarter of 2005. GM stock fell 14% in one day, eliminating over $12 billion in shareholder equity. In June, GM announced plans to eliminate another 25,000 jobs by 2008; 17 per cent of its US workforce of 111,000 union employees and 39,000 salaried staff, continuing a long trend of 5 per cent annual job losses among GM union workers.

It is only through the efforts of citizen activists that Flint is a tolerable place to live in. Volunteers clean up abandoned lots, paint over graffiti and pull debris out of the river. They run recreation leagues and food banks and serve on the boards of local non-profits. Mott Community College and the College Cultural Center are great assets. Some conscientious builders have raised low-income housing. What schools remain are still good. staffed by skilled, caring folks. Basketball legend Justus Thigpen and other athletes returned to Flint and run a successful program that has seen many young Flintites garner college scholarships and what would otherwise be an unreachable education. A group representing the Flint Diaspora has formed linking Flint natives now living elsewhere with activities supporting their hometown flintclub@yahoogroups.com.

Flint celebrates its 150th birthday this fall. After starting as a fur-trading post (talk about your unsustainable industries), Flint had a less than 70 year run as a model industrial community. The AFL-CIO and the UAW had less than that as a major, effective force for labor. Sweeney would be lucky to get 25 people to Cadillac Square today. All most folks know of Flint begins and ends with *Roger & Me*. Flint clearly is the fall guy for the collapse of American industrialism and the butt of way too many bad jokes. GM is the poster child for downsizing, outsourcing greedy corporations.

What does all this make the once-fierce, now impotent UAW/AFL-CIO? Too bad we can't ask John L. Lewis and Victor Reuther. CP

Michael Donnelly grew up in the 1950s heyday of Flint. He graduated from Mott Community College, the sole Flint school he attended that is still operating.

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